

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 3, 5-7 and 9-18 will have been amended. Claims 2 and 8 will have been canceled. Finally, claims 19 and 20 will have been submitted for consideration by the Examiner.

In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

Initially, Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for accepting the drawings filed on September 15, 2003. Applicants further wish to thank the Examiner for acknowledging their Claim of Foreign Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 and for confirming receipt of the certified copy of the priority document. Finally, Applicants note the filing of an Information Disclosure Statement in the present application on December 3, 2003.

In the Information Disclosure Statement, Applicants brought to the Examiner's attention two U.S. patent applications and provided copies of these applications for the Examiner's consideration. Because the Information Disclosure Statement was filed in full compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.97 and § 1.98, and was filed well before the issuance of the present Official Action, it is assumed that each of the pending applications cited therein has been considered by the Examiner. Of course, because these applications have not yet been patented, the Examiner could not indicate his consideration thereof on a PTO-1449 Form. Nevertheless, Applicants assume they were considered by the

Examiner. Should this not be the case, the Examiner is respectfully requested to clarify this matter in the next Official Action.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over SHAW (U.S. Patent No. 6,276,148) in view of BAHEL et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,628,201).

The Examiner indicated claims 2-6, 8, 9 and 11-18 as being objected to for being dependent upon a rejected base claim. However, the Examiner indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten into independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By the present Response and without in any manner acquiescing in the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely in order to expedite and advance the prosecution of the present application towards allowance, Applicants have rewritten the limitations of claim 2 into claim 1 and the limitations of claim 8 into claim 7. Claims 2 and 8 have been canceled. Additionally, by the present Response, Applicants have revised the language of all of the claims pending herein, in order to clarify the recitations thereof and in order to ensure that the language of the claims is in full compliance with U.S. syntax idiom and grammar. Additionally, Applicants have revised the claims to ensure that the scope of coverage provided thereby is commensurate with that desired and deserved by Applicants.

By the present Response, Applicants have further submitted new claims 19 and 20 for consideration by the Examiner. Claim 19 substantially corresponds to claim 11

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rewritten into independent form and should thus be allowable at least in accordance with the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 11.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejection and an indication of the allowability of all of claims, 1, 3-7 and 9-20. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

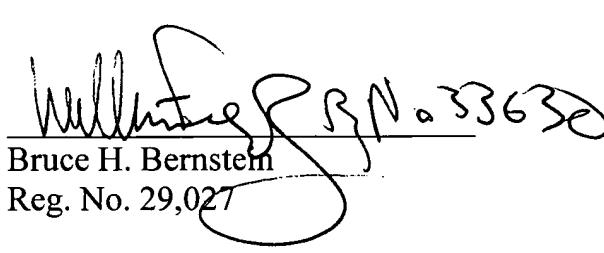
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have, without acquiescing in the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, rewritten several claims that have been indicated to contain allowable subject matter into independent form, thus rendering moot all the rejections in the present application. Accordingly, Applicants have provided a clear evidentiary basis supporting the patentability of all the claims in the present application and respectfully request an indication to such effect in due course.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
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